

## Pecos wrong for freeway say 2 state lawmakers

[By Doug Murphy](#)

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Two key state lawmakers both agreed that Pecos Road doesn't appear to be an appropriate route for the South Mountain Loop 202 Freeway during a Sept. 3 meeting.

"It's inconceivable to me that the 202 would be built along Pecos," said Sen. John Huppenthal, majority whip in the State Senate, who represents Ahwatukee Foothills and west Chandler.

He pointed to the impact the freeway would have on neighborhoods, including the removal of 255 homes to make way for the 10-lane freeway.

"It's unfathomable to me that it would go through and do that much damage," said Huppenthal, who before being elected to the State Senate spent years as a Chandler City Councilman, minimizing the impact of the 202 and 101 freeways to neighborhoods in that city.

Rep. John McComish, majority whip in the House, who lives in Ahwatukee Foothills, said that while the Gila River Indian Community currently opposes a freeway alignment on tribal land, south of Pecos Road, he's hoping attitudes will change.

"I remain cautiously optimistic that we can work something out with them," McComish said.

But if the freeway does eventually get built where Pecos Road now is, Huppenthal said he would help to make sure that there is minimum impact to residents.

"If it's going to be built... we've got to kick into high gear to make sure it has a minimal impact on residents," Huppenthal said during a town hall meeting in Ahwatukee Foothills on Wednesday.

Both said the Arizona Legislature has little input on the final decision. Instead, they pointed out that the Maricopa Association of Governments, which represents each city in the county and is responsible for county-wide transportation plans, along with the Federal Highway Administration, will make the final decision on the Loop 202 after the environmental impact statement is completed sometime next year.

Over the last few years the Arizona Department of Transportation has spent \$8.5 million to buy homes within the right of way and \$12 million for engineering services to produce an environmental impact statement needed before the freeway gets final approval.

Greta Rogers called for the lawmakers to investigate ADOT spending on the Loop 202.

"We don't pay taxes for irresponsible misuse of funds," said Rogers, who opposes the freeway as it was originally designed and instead wants a parkway where 18-wheel trucks would be prohibited.

In 1988 voters originally approved the Loop 202. Over the years the project went on hold as funding shortages reduced the number of freeway miles built in Maricopa County. During the

years there were proposals of building a parkway instead of a freeway and one plan to build the Loop 202 as a toll road on the Gila River Indian Community.

In 2004 voters approved a new transportation plan that included funding for the Loop 202, but didn't specify a route. At the same time ADOT's new design standards called for a wider freeway, which means that more homes than originally thought would have to go.

Since 2001 a Citizens Advisory Team has been assisting ADOT in the route and design of the freeway. It is expected that early next year there will be a draft environmental impact statement showing Pecos as the route in the east and roughly 51st Avenue in the west. The draft plan will be available for public comment before the final plan goes to the Maricopa Association of Governments and Washington for final approval.

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